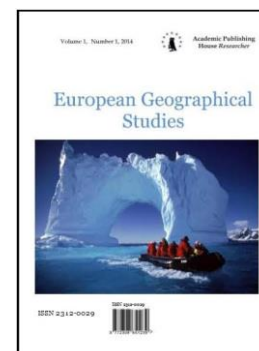


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Published in the Slovak Republic
European Geographical Studies
Has been issued since 2014.
ISSN: 2312-0029
E-ISSN: 2413-7197
2017, 4(2): 70-79

DOI: 10.13187/egs.2017.2.70
www.ejournal9.com



Traditional Food Producers and Possibilities of Their Tourist Affirmations the Territory of Bačka (Serbia)

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Abstract

The aim of the paper was to indicate the possibilities offered by the inclusion of traditional food products in the tourist offer of Bačka, a region bordered by the rivers Danube and Tisa in the northwestern part of Serbia. The purpose of the research was to identify who are the producers of traditional food products that are the main actors of the realization and confirmation of the conceptual plan. The communication was conducted in the form of questionnaires and interviews. The results obtained showed that the tourist affirmation of traditional food products would enhance the existing tourist offer. The emphasis on these products has been made so far once a year, when the manifestations bearing their names were organized. Their place, which until now was in the shadow of some other type of touristic movements, can be improved by organizing various tours, routes, to familiarize with the production process, tasting and selling these products. Other tourist attractions would be viewed as complementary. With the financial and political support of the government, quality control would be established, the volume of production of healthy eco-products and export potential would be increased. This would improve the material situation of producers. If this action would be successful, this could be the key to further development of rural areas in this part of the southeastern part of the Pannonian Basin. Development implies the improvement of the material situation of the producers and the creation of new employment opportunities that would keep or even bring back the population to the countryside.

Keywords: food, gastronomy, Bačka, traditional food producers, routes.

1. Introduction

The population of Bačka, in the northwestern part of the Republic of Serbia, traditionally makes food products for its own needs. This process is time-consuming and specific, and is not possible under industrial production conditions. Achieving a specific taste makes it original and unrepeatable. Because of this specialty it is attractive to both domestic and foreign visitors. This paper is inspired by the work of Bessiere and Tibere (2013), which states that tourist interest in different food cultures is a factor for local development in the fields of agro-food and crafts, whilst also contributing to the enhancement of food culture and heritage. The research shows the characteristics of the producers of traditional food products in Bačka and how much they are

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interested in affirmation in tourism. The importance of the paper is because of drawing attention to the existing forms of tourism trends that are influenced by traditional food products, but also to potential types of tourism activities. The enhancement of tourism offer could provide additional incomes to raise the standard of living in the countryside, which would only be able to stop the emigration process and depopulation.

2. Research Area

Bačka is located in the northwestern part of Serbia (Figure 2). It is bounded by the Danube in the west and south, while its tributary Tisa makes the eastern natural border of Bačka. The northern border of Bačka is pulled down by the southern part of the sandy terrain, which extends almost to Budapest northwards. Bačka extends in the southeastern part of the Pannonian Plain, at altitude of 70 to 140 meters. Its relief consists of inundational plains, alluvial terraces, pleistocene terraces, loess plateaus, and sand terrain. The largest areas of Bačka are under pleistocene terraces and loess plateaus, which are both in relief and soil quality excellent for cultivating any culture of moderate width. The plain of Bačka in conditions of moderate continental climate, rich in underground and surface waters, and above all black soil, has a good pedological cover in a relatively healthy environment with all the necessary prerequisites for the production of quality and healthy food. Located in the central European and Oriental gastronomic influences, for centuries it fosters the most rewarding recipes. Janjetović (2009) and Hadži-Zarić (2010) speak about the influences of Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Turkish and other surrounding cuisines.

3. Methods

Bačka was selected because it stands out in the region of Vojvodina by the number of registered craftsmen, which in return stands out in relation to other regions of Serbia (Stojanović, 2017). In the territory of Bačka, 94 traditional food producers were found which were willing for conversation. That means there are many more than that number.

The work was created by analyzing literature and interpreting the results obtained by statistical processing of data collected in the survey, as well as by interviewing traditional food producers. The interview was based on the questions that Fabeil (2013) used in her studies of traditional craftsmen in Malaysia.

Theoretical Approach

In Bačka, traditional food products are made for personal needs, but there are those who make them for sale. There are meat producers, milk processors and honey producers. However, there are others who are in the minority, and therefore are rarely mentioned, such as candy producers, halva producers, soda producers, traditional cake producers, etc. They belong to people who perform old crafts. In literature, the terms of gastronomy and craftsmanship usually stand side by side (Lee et al, 2009). Xie and Wall (2008) classify them into cultural elements and authentic ethnic tourist attractions.

According to Hung et al (2016), traditional crafts and handicrafts and gastronomy, in addition to cooking courses, porcelain painting, drawing and sculpture are considered creative activities in tourism. Ali et al. (2016) believe that creative tourists' experience is a good predictor of their memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions which makes a motivation for return, a good recommendation to friends, or a search for a similar place. Results of de Molina et al (2016) showed a definition of gastronomy as an intangible world heritage would be required. Looking at the production of food, as a kind of craft, is present in the paper. For Cobos et al. (2015) the kitchen, like the foundation of agro-food crafts, is a factor of national identity that goes beyond the mere fact of satisfying human needs. Bessiere and Tibere (2013) state that tourist interest in different food crops is a factor for local development in the fields of agro-food and crafts, while also contributing to the enhancement of food culture and heritage. Vaugeois and Predyk (2016) find that food artisans play critical role in providing destinations with authentic food products visitors and in growing the food tourism industry. According to Smith and Costello (2008), the wish to travel and taste unique and authentic foods is an emerging phenomenon in the tourism industry. It is a fact that food is increasingly appreciated as a significant part of the cultural tourism market and a key area of interest for rural areas.

Pallarès-Blanch et al (2015) emphasize that the lack of employment and in the process of restructuring in rural areas, women play a central role in new economic activities, especially those related to food crafts. Edima et al. (2014) and Cobos et al. (2015) point to the development of urban food crafts, which constitute, through street foods, both one of the main feeding sources of people and source of income. According to Tregear (2005), two strands of literature offer different conceptualizations of artisans, the first inferring proclivity towards co-operation and community involvement, the second assuming the prioritization of lifestyle goals over growth. Each conceptualization presents alternative implications for regional development. Review of the literature from the Bačka area leads to works on rural tourism (Petrović et al, 2016; Jegdić et al, 2017; Vujko et al, 2017), wine (Sekulic et al, 2016; Radovanovic et al, 2017) or manifestation tourism (Bjeljac et al, 2014; Blešić et al, 2014; Bjeljac, Ćurčić, 2016). Gastronomic tourism (Banjac et al, 2016; Vuksanović et al, 2017) and the forms of its manifestation in the area of Bačka have begun to be paid attention in recent years.

4. Results

The results of the research are related to the socio-demographic and other characteristics of the producers of traditional food products, and what are the characteristics of their job? How much are they willing to affirm themselves in touristic sense? And in what form could this tourist affirmation take?

Who are the guards of the gastronomic tradition of Bačka?

Respondents were located in each settlement of Bačka, but only 94 were willing to fill in the questionnaire and conduct verbal communication. Guards of gastronomic tradition are women. According to age categories, the relative majority of respondents are in the cohort of 50-59 years. According to the ethnic structure, most of the respondents were Serbs, but more than a third of traditional food producers were part of some of the smaller ethnic groups. Among them are mostly Hungarians and Slovaks (Table 1). Only a third of respondents come from other settlements, while most are from urban areas. According to education, most of them are highly educated, almost every fifth has completed secondary school, and almost every fourth has completed only primary school. The production of traditional food products is the only job for most of the respondents.

Respondents are owners of their craft business. Only every twentieth person started their business in a partnership. Half of the respondents have a registered business, while others state that the registration of business would jeopardize their economic viability. Nearly every fourth respondent owns a special space, workshop (Table 2). Most of the respondents work at home, while on average every tenth respondent does not want to say about the space in which they produce. Visibility on the tourist map must be condition the transparency of the production space, in order to be available in the quality control process.

Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of producers of traditional food products

		Number	%			Number	%
Gender	Male	45	47.9	Settlement	Town	59	62.8
	Female	49	52.1		Other	35	37.2
Age	20-29	3	3.2	Education	No school	1	1.1
	30-39	14	14.9		Primary school	22	23.4
	40-49	20	21.3		High school	18	19.1
	50-59	25	26.6		Faculty	53	56.4
	60 -69	24	25.5	Employment	The only job	51	54.3
	70 i više	8	8.5		Additional job	43	45.7

Ethnic groups	Serbs	61	64.9
	Hungarians	14	14.9
	Slovaks	11	11.7
	Croats	6	6.4
	Others	2	2.1

Source: Survey

Table 2 Other characteristics of producers of traditional food products

Questions	Answers	Number	%
Owner	The only one	89	94.7
	Partnership	5	5.3
A registered shop	Yes	47	50.0
	No	47	50.0
	Home	59	62.8
Place of production	In a workshop	22	23.4
	Somewhere else	13	13.8
Received help	Yes	31	33.0
	No	63	67.0
Market	International sale	6	6.4
	Outside of Bačka	27	28.7
	In Bačka	32	34.0
	Local	23	24.5
	Random	6	6.4

Source: Survey

Research on the basic characteristics of the job of the producers of traditional food products

Based on the communication with traditional producers, the following findings have been made. They generally have an easy access to raw materials, equipment and sales opportunities. Regarding the market, some producers have shown that it exists also beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia. The relative majority, which is one third of the respondents, sell their products in the region, in the area of Bačka. As they say, big cities, such as Novi Sad, Subotica and Sombor, 'eat' it all quickly. Almost a quarter of respondents sell their products to the local community because their production volume is modest or their quality is proven and verified. Some of them state that they are more likely to work by order than that 'their goods wait for the buyer'. These results show that the production of traditional products is currently economically viable.

Respondents agree that they prefer to do the job independently, as well as they fully believe in their skills. Respondents consider they have the skills to perform craftsmanship and manage equipment. They agreed also that they have the ability to connect with other people in order to create new ideas, solve problems and develop new jobs. Most of them say they are constantly working to improve the organization and planning of production and sales. They fully agreed that they constantly plan new and better ways of doing things to improve performance.

One of the positions with which they agreed most is that their crafts allow them to be independent. Most say their craft is a passion, but also a great way to earn money. Respondents agree that they have flexible working hours and are usually refer it as a great advantage of this job. Respondents feel the support of friends and family and agree that they listen to their advices.

The opinions of the respondents were divided as to how the external factors can influence the performance of the craft activity they perform. Thus, according to the mean value and the value of

standard deviation, respondents cannot say that they think that unexpected obstacles really prevent them from achieving what they want.

However, the research has shown that there are some difficulties and problems. Traditional food producers say they find it hard to find workers. The production process is long, requires patience, knowledge, tidiness. They consider that young people prefer jobs for which they do not have to invest much effort and which bring them a quick profit.

It is hard for them to get additional funding sources and do not consider to have support from government agencies. But standard deviation also shows high levels of their mutual disagreement on these issues. This means that things vary from one individual to another. Lukić et al. (2015) talk about the existence of some forms of state aid in crafts on the territory of Bačka. In the survey, almost a third of respondents said they had received some form of support from the government sector (Table 2). Respondents who felt political or financial support commented that they knew people from the profession who never asked for help, and they explain that this could be the reason they could not get it.

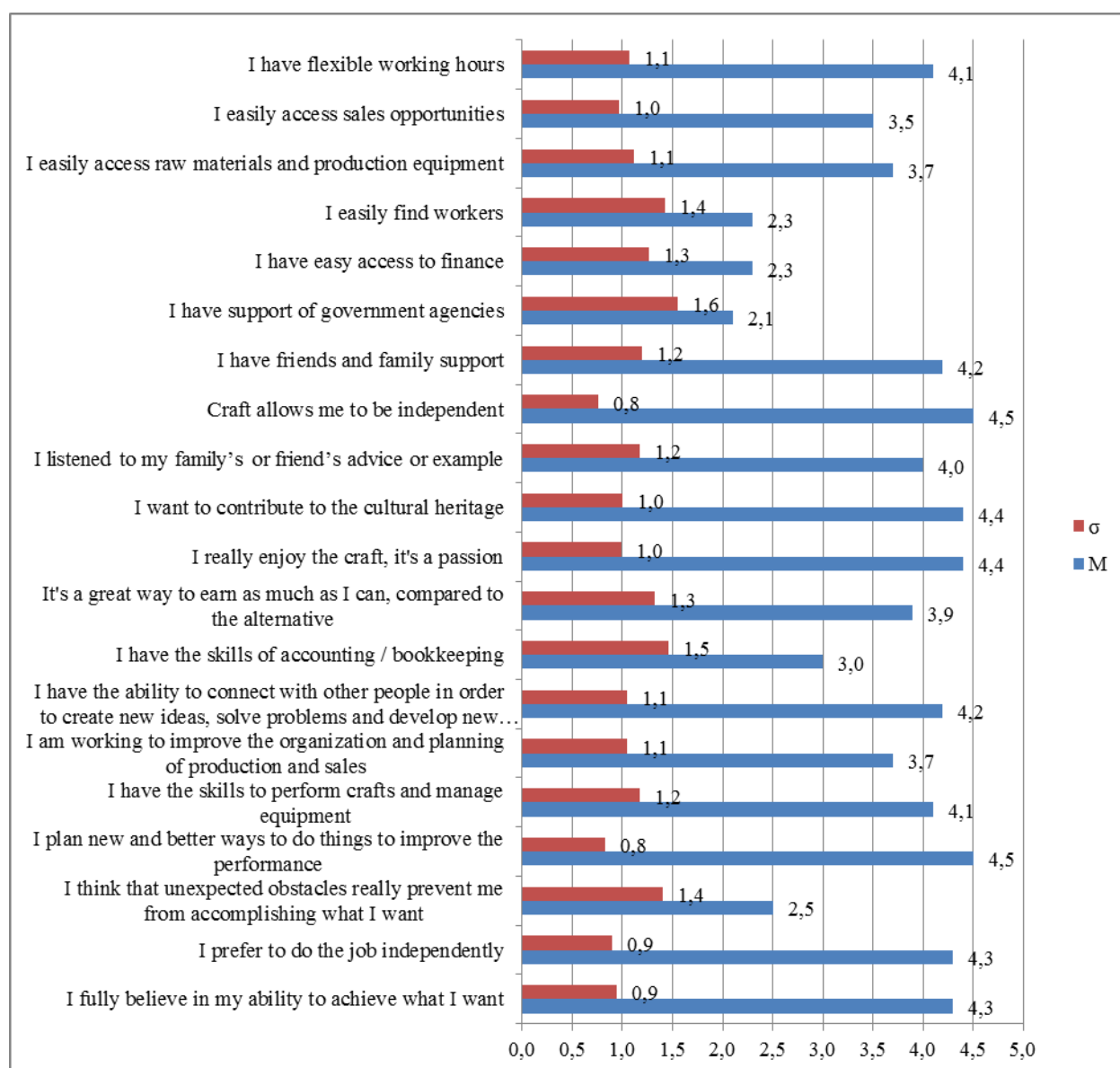


Fig. 1. Results of descriptive statistics based on the questions in the survey

Source: Survey

Based on the answers received, it can be clearly seen that the respondents are indecisive about the possession of skills in accounting or bookkeeping. This means that some have problems with it. The high value of standard deviation indicates that there is a great deal of disagreement among them. The differences that have arisen are a consequence of the financial situation. Those who have good earnings can run the business legally and finance accounting and bookkeeping services. In the worst position are the producers of traditional food products that want to work legally, but earnings do not allow them to pay for auxiliary workforce, such as accountants, and they themselves 'cope with paperwork'.

The most important attitude about which all respondents were very united and clear is that there is a desire to contribute to their cultural heritage through their actions. Cultural heritage is one of foundations for tourism development (McKercher, Du Cros, 2002; Ismagilov et al., 2014; Sharpley, Telfer, 2014).

5. Discussion

This part of the paper will identify the facts obtained by talking with people who produce food in the traditional way. As the survey showed, local producers of traditional food products do not have sales problems. However, according to their words, sales could be even higher. The chance to increase is seen in tourism. Food products of traditional crafts are referred by tourists as 'tasty souvenirs'. Producers of traditional food products are already well-affirmed in touristic sense at various gastronomic events (Gagić et al., 2013). Among the most visited are: 'Strudel fest' in Bačka Palanka, 'Kulen sausage festival' in Bački Petrovac, 'Sausage festival' in Turija, 'Pihtije festival' and 'Bean festival' in Temerin, 'Šajkaška Mundijada', 'Golden pot' and 'Škembijada' in Žabalj (Internet, 2017). Getz, Page (2016) observe an increased interest in the events, so these are rapidly developing and making a significant contribution to business and leisure-related tourism. As gastronomic manifestations in the area of Bačka are organized once a year, and the potentials for the production and sale of these products exist most often throughout the year, there is a consideration of other types of tourist movements, such as various gastronomic routes.

The reasons for validity of the organization of gastronomic routes are numerous. Unlike manifestations, they can be organized always or when a group of interested parties is formed. In the form of visits to workshops of traditional food producers, they can be organized indoors. This means that weather conditions do not constitute a limiting factor for them. In addition, both in terms of time, and in terms of other wishes of tourists, their routes can be adjusted. Time means they can last a part of the day, all day or more days. Bačka has an area of about 8671 km square. It extends along the north-south direction in a length of about 100 km. In the east-west direction, Bačka extends up to 90 km. The infrastructure is such that all main roads are asphalted and the international route E-75 goes in the north-south direction. Therefore, it can be said that every village is reached in less than two hours of drive. Routes can be adjusted according to the wishes to visit some other natural, cultural-historical, sports-recreational and similar sites.

Traditional knowledge of the production of traditional food products has been passed from one generation to another for centuries. In each settlement there are 'those who know' to make them. Quality standards should be respected, for which the competent authorities would have to devise and organize control mechanisms.

The Figure 2 shows the proposal of 'sweet route', that is, locations of the producers of traditional sweet foods from honey and sugar. The Figure 3 shows those who make the so-called 'salty' products primarily from meat and milk. Locations on maps show those who have agreed to participate in the survey. Based on this, it was concluded that they were more willing to contact with tourists than those who were not willing to contact even with researchers. At each stopping point in the gastronomic route, tourists can get acquainted with the production process, then taste and eventually buy any gastronomic product.

The production process of some products is short, so it can be directly observed in the observation rooms. With longer production processes, tourists can attend a certain stage of production, while others can be demonstrated virtually, through a story or using props.

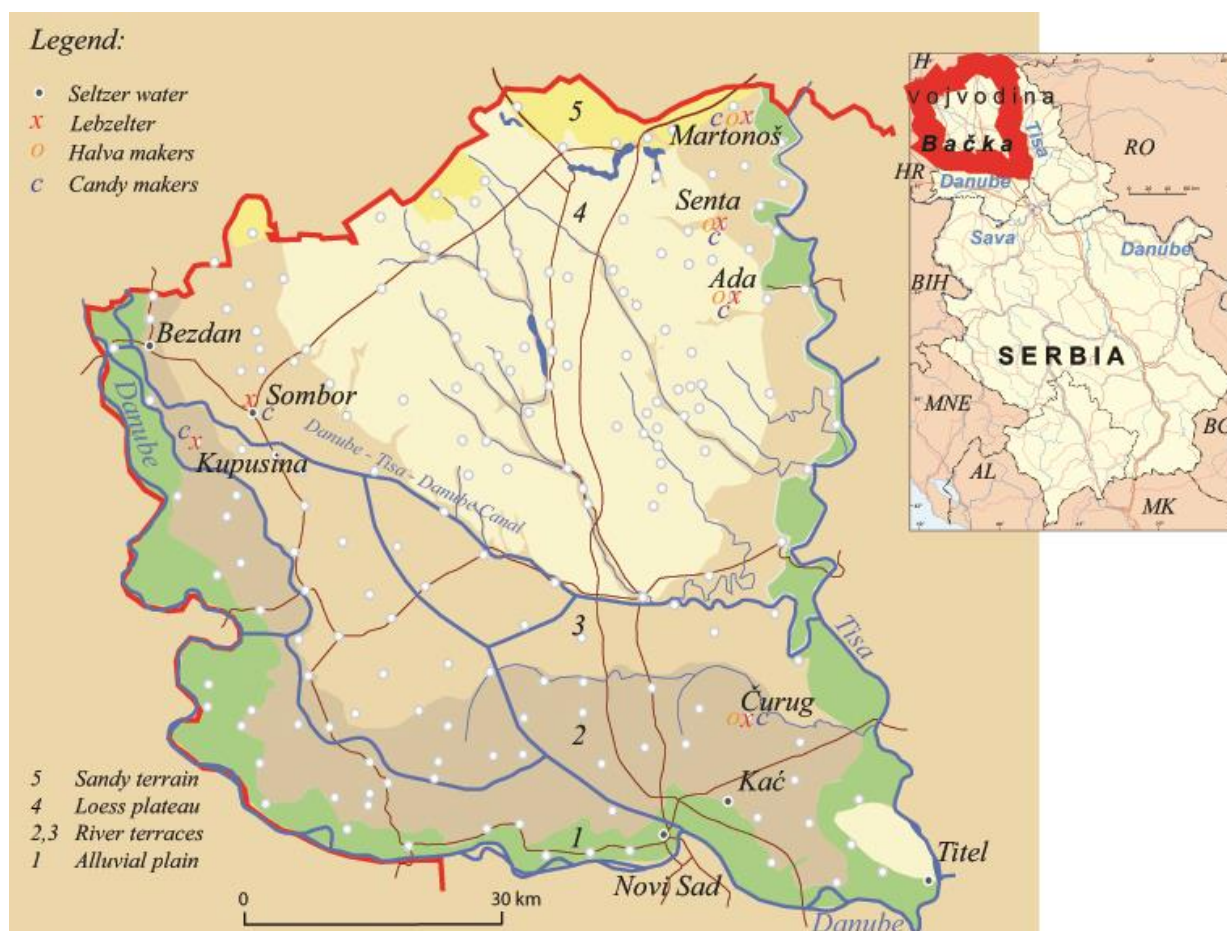


Fig. 2 Famous locations where sweet products are made can be potential spots on the ‘Sweet Route’

Interviewed interlocutors agreed that souvenirs of traditional craft food products are unique. Each workshop has its own secret recipe achieving an unrepeatably taste. Souvenirs are rarely edible, let alone of phenomenal taste, as one of the interlocutors says. Namely, the interlocutors praised their use value. Many products have already received attractive packaging so they are also attractive, observing from this segment of marketing. The respondents agreed that not all products by which Bačka is recognizable have protected their geographical origin and that this potential has not been fully exploited.

In support of the sustainability of such a tourist offer, all other pull factors must be perfect, such as: organization, environmental standards, accommodation capacities, marketing and promotion of complementary tourism potentials that are not gastronomic, cultural-historical, manifestation ones or of some other nature. Knowledge of ancestors about food production is valuable. Experience along ‘small secrets’ influences the originality of taste. Emancipation of hard-working people of ‘good will’ with respect to the prescribed quality standards can positively affect their standard of living. The higher standard brings greater interest among the population, especially young people, in the production of traditional food products, which affects the sustainability of old crafts related to food production. Handmade production raises the price of finished products, however, it is affordable to markets of higher standard than Serbia has. So it can be said that a more aggressive promotion of products abroad will contribute to sustainability, for which it is also necessary to achieve a certain level of productivity increase.

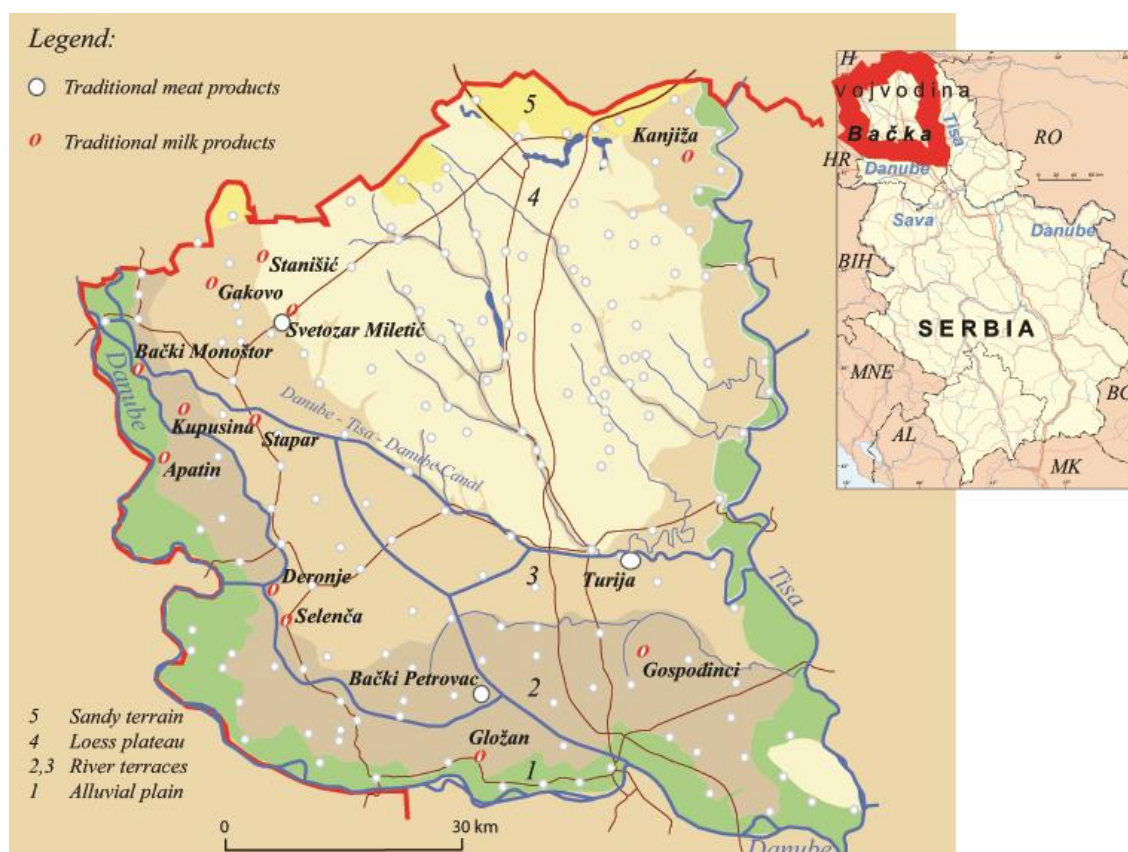


Fig. 3 Famous locations where salt products are made can be potential spots on the ‘Salt Route’
Source: Basic map adapted from Bugarski, 2000

Vojvodina is affected by the process of depopulation (Kosic et al., 2015; Stojšin, 2015; Simić, Bajčetić, 2016). Negative natural increase and migration towards urban centers and abroad are emptying rural settlements. Real estate is sold at low prices, that is, a drastic fall in real estate prices is recorded (Ranisavljević, Hadžić, 2016). They can be viewed as potential accommodation capacities on the mentioned routes. Based on that, in addition to the traditional food producers, it would be possible to affirm the entrepreneurial ideas of the local population about the organization, arrangement and maintenance of accommodation capacities. It is superfluous to talk about the benefits that would come with the success of the longer stay of tourists in the territory of Bačka.

6. Conclusion

Food products made in a traditional manner in the workshops of traditional craftsmen have a perspective and are sustainable. The ecological sustainability of this activity is obvious, because the raw materials are in the nature. Often they are totally usable. If in some process of making unusable rests remain, they are bio-degradable and as such do not pollute the environment. Economic sustainability is visible, but everyone is striving to increase it. Financial support and government support that would be significant for expanding production. Expanded production would produce surpluses for exports. Target export groups are members of the diaspora, who recognize these products by quality, can afford them and affect their sense of nostalgia. Establishing certain economic sustainability would have a positive impact on social sustainability. The lack of a workforce will be overcome if the possibility of good earnings is determined. Money attracts young people, but also all working people. Based on this, it can be said that the products of the traditional food production influence the maintenance of the rural area of Bačka, and Vojvodina as well. Tourism in all its forms, primarily routes in this case, only ‘goes in favor of the need to increase jobs in production, placement, and in other related activities (care about procurement, accommodation capacities, marketing, etc.). People are run by the money. Based on this, it can be concluded that everyone with entrepreneurial ambition and in accordance with

standards can become food craft producers. The results of the paper can be a motivation, a business idea for young people and be an incentive to spread the same and similar activities.

7. Acknowledgment

This paper is part of the project No. 142-451-2669/2017 funded by the Provincial Secretariat for Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Vojvodina Province, Serbia. The authors are grateful to the reviewers, whose comments and criticisms have ensured the quality of the paper. The authors wish to thank Dr Tatjana Stojanovic who has helped in communication with respondents.

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